Claims 1-3, 5-6, 10-17, 19-20, 23-29, 31-32, and 35-39 have been rejected under 35

U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over International Application No. WO

00/57318 to Forde et al. in view of International Application No. WO 00/62220 to Brown et

al. Claims 4, 18, and 30 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being

unpatentable over Forde et al. in view of Brown et al. and further in view of U.S. Patent

Application Publication No. 2002/0078140 A1 to Kelly et al. Claims 7-9, 21-22, 33, and 34

have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Forde et al.

in view of Brown et al. and Kelly et al. and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,742,769 to

Lee et al.

Applicant has carefully considered the Examiner's comments and the cited art, and

respectfully submits that independent claim 1 is patentably distinct from the cited art for at

least the following reasons.

Independent claim 1 relates to a digital signature system comprising a database

holding access control rules that identify documents authorized users are allowed to have

electronically signed, and a signing system capable of receiving signature requests from a

plurality of authorized users, each signature request including a document to be signed,

wherein the signing system parses the document to be signed and compares information

obtained thereby to the access control rules stored in the database to determine whether the

authorized user is authorized to have the document signed, and wherein if it is determined

that the authorized user is authorized to have the document signed, the signing system signs

the document using authentication information unique to the signing system.

Forde et al., as understood by Applicant, relates to a computer-based method and

system for applying a set of business signing rules for the processing of electronic documents.

The method includes the steps of verifying the identity of an authorized user using a predefined verification protocol, determining a set of privileges associated with the authorized user, filling in an electronic document in accordance with the privileges and based on inputs provided by the authorized user, attaching a digital signature to the electronic document, and transmitting the electronic document to an authorized recipient of the electronic documents in accordance with the privileges.

The Office Action states that Forde et al. does not disclose parsing a document, and apparently cites Brown et al. as disclosing this element (see Office Action, p. 2, lns. 24-25).

Brown et al., as understood by Applicant, relates to a virtual signing room that facilitates the collaborative creation, editing, reviewing, and signing of electronic documents by parties situated in remote locations. The room provides real-time access to agreement documents regardless of geographical locations of the various parties involved, and provides a complete audit trail for all activity occurring in the room. The virtual signing room accepts and processes digital signatures coupled with secure authentication of parties to implement document signing.

As understood by Applicant, the documents utilized in the system of Forde et al. include electronic purchasing orders, invoices, and cheques, each including a plurality of electronic data fields (see Forde et al., p. 8, lns. 18-29). The electronic documents are stored in persistent storage contained in a server (see id., p. 9, lns. 14-17). The documents are made available for completion by an authorized user of a purchasing intelligent device (see id.).

In contrast, as recited in independent claim 1, the signing system is capable of receiving signature requests from a plurality of authorized users, each signature request including a document to be signed, as recited in independent claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicant finds no teaching or suggestion in the cited art of a signing system capable of receiving signature requests from a plurality of authorized users, each signature request including a document to be signed, and a signing system that signs the document using information unique to the signing system when it is determined by the signing system that the authorized user is authorized to have the document signed, as recited in independent claim 1.

In addition, the Office Action indicates that Brown et al. discloses a parser which parses the document to "identify the portion to be signed" by the signor.

In contrast, independent claim 1 recites that the signing system parses the document to be signed and compares information obtained thereby to the access control rules stored in the database to determine whether the authorized user *is authorized* to have the document signed

Accordingly, Applicant submits that independent claim 1 is patentable over the cited art. Independent claims 15, 27, and 39 are believed to be patentable over the cited art for at least similar reasons.
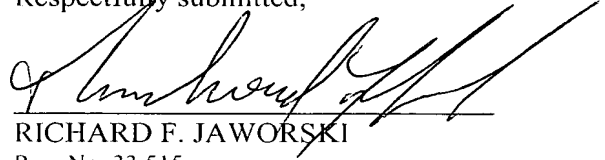
The Office is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees that may be required in connection with this response and to credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a petition for an extension of time is required to make this response timely, this paper should be considered to be such a petition, and the Commissioner is authorized to charge the requisite fees to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a telephone interview could advance the prosecution of this application, the

Examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney.

Entry of this response and allowance of this application are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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